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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000768

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [WHO](#) [TBIO](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN TO APPLY FOR WHO MEMBERSHIP

REF: TAIPEI 00719

Classified By: AIT Acting Director Robert S. Wang,
Reason 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister James Huang informed the Acting Director on April 6 that Taiwan has decided to apply for WHO membership rather than WHA observership this year. President Chen Shui-bian will send a letter directly to WHO Director-General Margaret Chan on April 12 applying for membership under the name "Taiwan." Because WHO procedures allow the Director-General to invite applicants for membership to become WHA observers while their applications are under review, there will be a linkage between the quests for observership and membership. Huang said Taiwan has decided on this new approach because of strong domestic pressure, frustration over the lack of substantive results in its ten-year campaign for WHA observership, and frustration that its efforts at meaningful participation have been "seriously obstructed by the 2005 China-WHO MOU." Huang, who expressed hope the U.S. would continue to support Taiwan's approach, noted that TECRO Representative David Lee will be instructed to deliver the same message in Washington. Pointing out that he had no instructions, ADIR said he would report to Washington immediately. Nonetheless, established U.S. policy, ADIR noted, is to support meaningful participation and observer status but not membership for Taiwan. Speaking informally, he expressed concern that a membership campaign might undermine Taiwan's efforts to increase meaningful participation and to become a WHA observer. End Summary.

12. (C) Foreign Minister James Huang informed the Acting Director on April 6 that Taiwan has decided to apply for membership to the World Health Organization (WHO) ahead of the World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting scheduled for May 13-24. President Chen Shui-bian will send an application letter directly to WHO Director-General Margaret Chan on April 12, the first such letter by the President, requesting membership status under the name "Taiwan." Huang asserted that the use of "Taiwan" does not represent a "name change" as Taiwan has previously applied for observer status under the name "Health Entity of Taiwan" or "Taiwan." Huang added that Taiwan will request also that Director-General Chan grant Taiwan interim observer status while its membership

application is under review. (Note: MOFA Director-General for International Organizations David Lin pointed out that the Director-General "may" extend such an invitation under WHO regulations. Lin also said that Taiwan will not separately apply for WHA observer status this year as that would conflict with its membership application.)

13. (C) Huang stated that Taiwan is departing from its previous approach of applying for WHA observer status because of strong domestic pressure to seek membership rather than observership, frustration with a lack of substantive results from its ten-year observership campaign, and the "serious obstruction" of the 2005 China-WHO MOU to Taiwan's efforts to increase meaningful participation in working-level meetings. Huang cited a recent public opinion poll that shows over 90 percent of people on Taiwan support applying for WHO membership and he noted that large numbers of legislators and medical professionals have been pressuring the administration to initiate such a campaign.

14. (C) Huang expressed hope the U.S. would "continue to support" Taiwan's approach this year, pointing to U.S. previous support for observer status and meaningful participation. Huang said MOFA would be prepared to send an official to Washington in late April if needed to further discuss Taiwan WHO strategy. Huang expressed hope that Washington would inform U.S. representatives in Geneva about Taiwan's membership application and that Taiwan and U.S. representatives could coordinate in Geneva. Huang said he would instruct TECRO Representative David Lee to deliver the same message on the Taiwan decision to apply for WHO membership to U.S. officials in Washington. Huang noted that

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the U.S. was the first country to be informed of the new Taiwan approach and he added that Taiwan would solicit the support of its diplomatic partners for its membership application. Huang asked the U.S. to keep the current consultations with Taiwan on this issue confidential, adding that Taiwan plans to make a public announcement of its decision next week after the letter is delivered to the WHO. Having said this, Foreign Minister Huang and Director-General Lee claimed that Taiwan has no intention of "politicizing" the WHO membership campaign.

15. (C) Emphasizing that he was speaking without instructions, ADIR noted that the U.S. supports meaningful participation and observer status for Taiwan but not membership. Speaking informally, he expressed concerns that Taiwan's decision to apply for membership under the name Taiwan might well undermine the long-term, patient efforts to increase Taiwan's meaningful participation in working-level WHO meetings and to increase support for Taiwan's observership bid. ADIR agreed to convey this request to Washington.
WANG